



DR. J. D. DWINN
THANKSGIVING SERMON

NOVEMBER, 1864

THE HAPPINESS OF A PEOPLE
ILLUSTRATED AND EXPLAINED.



A

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SECOND BAPTIST SOCIETY

IN BOSTON,

NOVEMBER 29th, 1804 :

BEING THE DAY OF

Annual Thanksgiving.

By THOMAS BALDWIN, D. D.

Pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Boston.

PUBLISHED BY PARTICULAR REQUEST.



B O S T O N :

PRINTED FOR

ADAMS & RHOADES, COURT-STREET.

1805.

THE HAPPINESS OF A PEOPLE
ILLUSTRATED AND EXPLAINED

S E R M O N

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SECOND BAPTIST SOCIETY

IN BOSTON

NOVEMBER 10th 1831

BEING THE DAY OF

Annual Commencement

By THOMAS BALDWIN, D.D.

Pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Boston

PUBLISHED BY PARTICULAR REQUEST



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PRINTED FOR

ADAMS & RHODES, COURT STREET

1831

from Rev. W. W. Barker Wm. or what
May 1926

Sermon.

PSALM cxiv. 15.

HAPPY IS THAT PEOPLE THAT IS IN SUCH A CASE; YEA,
HAPPY IS THAT PEOPLE WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD.

HAPPINESS is the great object which directs all our pursuits. It presents itself to our imagination in a thousand different forms, and suggests as many different ways which lead to its attainment. As a stimulus to laudable exertion this desire was kindly implanted in the human breast by the beneficent Author of existence. And notwithstanding so many appear to us to go wide of the mark, happiness, either real or imaginary, is the goddess, to which they are devoted.

This principle pervades all public bodies as well as individuals. They are alike susceptible of it in different degrees. The same blessings which constitute the happiness of an individual, if generally diffused, would have nearly the same effect upon a whole community.

That some nations, as well as some individuals, are favoured with more ample means of happiness than others, it is conceived will not be denied. The allwise Creator hath displayed in infinite variety his bounties of nature and providence. These
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on some are poured in rich profusion, whilst to others they seem to be meted out with a sparing hand. Notwithstanding this unequal distribution, it will after all be concluded, that our happiness depends, far less upon the means we possess for enjoyment, than upon the use we make of those means.

Among the numerous blessings conferred upon the children of men, *peace* and *plenty* are two principal sources of earthly felicity. And that people, who enjoy all the numerous advantages resulting from these, accompanied with the favour of God, may be pronounced happy.

The author of our text contemplated a state of society, which he thought worthy of this high appellation. Like all other wise and virtuous rulers, he had the prosperity and happiness of the people, over whom he presided, much at heart. And although he could not command prosperity, yet he was indulged the pleasure of contemplating and praying for it. The whole context is therefore cast into the form of a prayer, each article forming an interesting part of one continued petition.

If this statement be just, the text must be considered as a conclusion drawn from the preceding premises. These, together with the additional article in the passage before us, in the view of this holy man, constituted the essential happiness of a people.

It is the design of the ensuing discourse to explain the sentiments of the text, and show when a people may be said to be happy.

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It is evident that the writer of this psalm expressed what appeared to him desirable to make a nation truly happy, rather than what actually existed. Deeply sensible that this object could never be realized but in the enjoyment of peace, he begins his description at the 11th verse ; and first of all prays to be delivered from his enemies : or, in other words, from pretended, but false and insidious friends. *Rid me (saith he) and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and whose right-hand is a right-hand of falsehood.* Although David had a large share of domestic troubles, occasioned by the misconduct of some of his children, yet, in the passage before us, he is thought not to speak as the head of a family, but as the chief magistrate of a nation. He well knew that honourable peace was one of the first of national blessings. He therefore prays to be *rid and delivered from the hand of strange children.* But who are the characters here intended ? Are they not those unnatural productions which are to be met with in every country, whose feelings are so alien and unpatriotic, as always to prefer some other country and government to their own. There were many of the Israelites of this description. These preferred a few *leeks and onions*, with the slavery of Egypt, to the free, independent enjoyment of a land flowing with *milk and honey.*

Under a despotic government, where men are deprived of their sacred, inherent rights, dissatisfaction ceases to be a crime. But the case is widely different,

different, where equal rights and privileges are enjoyed. Here it is often difficult to assign to opposition an honourable motive. But considering that imperfection is not only the common lot of humanity, but is inscribed on the best forms of civil government, we are bound to believe, that some through the influence of prejudice may conscientiously oppose such measures as tend directly to promote the public good. But in too many instances it is to be feared, that opposition springs from a spirit of malevolence and disappointed ambition. It is thought that David had reference to persons of this latter description. They are the mere excrescences which grow out of a luxuriant freedom.

Whose mouth (saith he) speaketh vanity. Whether they flattered or opposed; whether they applauded or condemned; it was all one, it was still vanity. No dependance could be placed upon their fairest pretensions. He adds,

Their right-hand is a right-hand of falsehood. The right-hand, in the figurative language of scripture, generally signifies power. The author of the text seems to pray to be delivered from the unnatural influence of such characters. Or may we suppose him to speak with reference to a time of danger, when the whole strength of the nation would be called into action? In such a critical situation he well knew that no dependance could be put, or confidence placed in these strange children. To promote some favourite scheme, or to gratify a spirit

rit of revenge, they might sacrifice the dearest interests of their country. Wretched indeed must be the condition of that people, who are obliged in any sense to rely on those whose right-hand is a right-hand of falsehood, or even to commit its defence in time of danger to any mercenary force whatever.

In any country where a considerable proportion of the people are unfriendly to that *particular form* of government under which they live, it is to be expected that they will avail themselves of every possible pretext, to clog its motions and embarrass its proceedings. Attempts are often made to subvert the essential principles of a government, under the plausible pretext of *amendment* and *reformation*. Whilst no rational man would reject such alterations as experience should plainly point out, yet, at the same time, he would adopt with great caution, any measures which might have a tendency to shake the pillars of social order and happiness. Hence every wise and good ruler, who prefers the blessings of peace and tranquillity to those confused scenes, which are inseparably connected with a state of revolution, will adopt the language of the pious Psalmist, and pray to be "rid and delivered" from the deceptive influence of such strange children.

With a view to the attainment of that happiness, of which nations are susceptible, and to guard against the wicked designs of unprincipled ambitious men, it is of the highest importance that general and correct information be every where diffus-

ed. In a Republic, every citizen ought to be thoroughly acquainted with the principles of government, so that when called to exercise the rights of a freeman he may do it understandingly. To this end literary and moral instruction ought to be encouraged and supported. Where these advantages are withheld from a people, it cannot be expected that they will long enjoy their liberties. In correspondence with this idea, we proceed to consider the *second* petition in the context.

That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth ; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace. It is evident at first view, that David had immediate reference, to the cultivation and improvement of the mind. In any other sense his language would be absurd. He could not surely mean that they might grow up to the stature and size of men in their youth ; for it is well known that this is the period which will bring them (if ever) to that stature. But as it respects the mind, some men remain children even to old age.

The establishment of schools, and other literary institutions, has a direct tendency to enlighten and expand the mind. To form, invigorate, and give permanency to virtuous principles. To soften and direct the wayward passions, and to aid our perceptions in all our inquiries after truth. To assist us in pursuing a right path, through all the vicissitudes and storms, the labyrinths and perplexities of life.

Moral and religious instruction is still more important. As the former is designed to enrich and adorn the mind, this is intended to mend the heart. The former is calculated to give us just and exalted conceptions of virtue, the latter leads us to the attainment and practice of it. A good education enables us to discharge with propriety the various duties of life, but religious instruction is designed to fit us for heaven.

Where the education of children is neglected, they necessarily grow up in a state of ignorance and barbarism. By this cruel neglect they are in a great degree incapacitated for those important stations in society which their virtue, genius, and talents would otherwise entitle them to; and which they might fill with honour and advantage.

Youth is the "moulding age." This is the season to lay the foundation for usefulness and glory. Most of the principles which actuate and govern the conduct of men in future life, are imbibed at an early period. Early habits either of virtue or vice, are with difficulty subdued or shaken off. What is simply termed ignorance in youth, advanceth with age to a state of confirmed obstinacy.

That there are some men to whom advantages of education have been principally denied, who by the energy of their own genius have risen to eminent stations in society, will not be denied. But if men of sensibility, what regrets
and

and mortifications must they have experienced in a thousand instances, owing wholly to this neglect.

The preceding observations may serve to illustrate this part of the petition, *That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth* ; and will convince us that nothing less can be meant, than that their minds be early formed to the love of virtue, and richly stored with all kinds of useful knowledge.

Nor did the Hebrew magistrate forget the fair daughters of Israel. With the tender solicitude of a father he contemplated such advantages for them, as would not fail to render them ornaments to their sex, and blessings to society. This sentiment is very beautifully expressed in the following words, *That our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace*. This language, though figurative, very clearly asserts the important rank of the female character in society. That the education of female children has been too much neglected in every country, has been generally acknowledged. While we blush for our past neglects, let us carefully improve every opportunity in our power, in furnishing them with all the necessary advantages of a good education. If we wish our daughters to be as *corner-stones* in the temple of social happiness, the cultivation of their minds must not be neglected. The most powerful motives urge us to assist them in the attainment of every useful and pleasing accomplishment,

accomplishment. With minds thus enriched with all the endowments of a finished education, and adorned with the lovely graces of virtue and religion, they will appear in the amiableness of their manners, to be *polished after the similitude of a palace.*

Where due care is taken and suitable provision made for the education of children of both sexes, a foundation is laid for the happiness of a people, so far as it depends on the general diffusion of knowledge among them. We proceed to observe,

3. That a competency of the good things of this life, is necessary to our present happiness.

This idea will fully appear as we follow the author of the context, who adds, *That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets; that our oxen may be strong to labour.* This is a concise, but ample description of the blessings which distinguish and crown a state of plenty. It will be readily admitted that happiness is not excluded from the abodes of poverty. But if the good things of this life are blessings for which we ought to be thankful, and for which we are called upon this day by our worthy chief magistrate, to offer our grateful acknowledgments to their beneficent Author; they certainly must constitute a considerable part of our present enjoyment. Where the comfortable means of subsistence are obtained with difficulty, and shared with a cautious parsimony lest they should utterly fail,
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and their owners come to want ; it is easy to see, that a host of wants and anxieties will commit perpetual depredations on the tranquillity and happiness of such a people. When Joshua sent the spies to search out a country for the chosen tribes, one discouraging objection which they made on their return was, that the land through which they had passed was *a land which eat up its inhabitants*.*

Some parts of this globe we should suppose were never designed for cultivation. Such places if inhabited by human beings, will reluctantly yield them the bare means of subsistence. Can it be conceived, that those rude Greenlanders, who inhabit the regions which border upon the pole, possess equal means of happiness with ourselves ? In this frozen land for several months, substantial night holds her gloomy empire. During this dreary season, the inhabitants muffled in peltry, pursue the chase by the light reflected from the snow by the *aurora borealis* ; and if successful in hunting, return to their caverned huts to enjoy their homely fare. Does this precarious mode of living conduce as much to the happiness of a people, as to have their sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets ? You will hardly believe it, my brethren.

If by misfortune a person should be cast upon these inhospitable shores, who had been accustomed to

* It has been said that one reason why the aborigines of this country used to destroy their feeble, sickly infants was, the difficulty with which they obtained the means of supporting them.

to living where there were barns full of all manner of store, he would scarcely think it possible to exist.†

To be transported to these unfriendly climes, would be thought by an American a punishment almost as great as perpetual imprisonment, or even death itself. Ought not a people then to think themselves happy whose *lines are fallen to them in pleasant places*? where their garner is full, and where they are enriched by the labour of the ox, and the abundant increase of sheep?

4. It is essential to the happiness of a people to dwell in peace and safety. It follows in our context, *That there be no breaking in, nor going out*—either of which must greatly disturb the tranquillity of a people.

By *breaking in*, we may understand invasion in every form; whether by sea or land; whether by open, avowed enemies, or by secret, treacherous, marauding parties. In either case, the peace of a nation would be destroyed. Those whose interest it is to commit depredations upon others, seldom want a pretext for their conduct. But happy is that nation, whose own strong arm is prepared to repel such unlawful aggressions, when a magnanimous display of justice will not secure them from insult. That

† The flesh of the *rein-deer* is the greatest luxury of this country. Their principal provisions are fish, seals, and sea-fowl. In some parts of Norway bread is so scarce that they are obliged to supply its place by a kind of farinacious substance, made of *oat-meal* mixed with a flour produced from the bark of the *fir*. In Iceland, their principal food is fish and sour butter. Bread is so scarce among them that there is hardly any peasant who eats it more than three or four months in a year.....Guthrie.

That there be no breaking in, *nor going out*. By this last clause is probably intended a spirit of alienation, terminating in revolt. How often has this been experienced? In some instances, large divisions of an empire have either revolted to an enemy, or declared themselves independent. This *going out*, generally agitates and weakens the state which it leaves, if it does not increase the number or strengthen its enemies.

5. The happiness of a people does not depend less upon their safety from foreign invasion than upon their internal tranquillity. This can be rationally expected only where equal rights are enjoyed, and where equal justice is distributed. This sentiment is expressed in the words immediately preceding the text,

That there be no complaining in our streets. There are two kinds of government where the people make but little complaint. The one is an absolute despotic government, where, though the people are greatly oppressed, they are afraid to complain. Complaining would probably serve no other purpose than to increase their tasks, as it did the poor enslaved Israelites in Egypt. The other is, where the people enjoy as great a degree of liberty as is consistent with the establishment and support of social order. Where each sits under his own vine and fig-tree, and none to make him afraid. In this case we can see no reasonable ground of complaint. But if any part of a community are disfranchised,

franchised, or in any way deprived of their civil or religious rights, it must be expected that they will complain. Nor will their complainings cease, until their cause is heard and their privileges restored.

Could we find a people possessing all the blessings which have now been enumerated, should we not be led to exclaim with the holy psalmist, *Happy is the people that is in such a case?* But shall we not rather add, *Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord?* This brings us to the 6th and last particular, which is to show, that whatever outward blessings a people may enjoy, they cannot be completely happy, even in the present state without religion. This finishes the description by the inspired author of our text.

Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Much is contained in this part of the subject, but we have only time to enumerate a few particulars, without entering into an explanation of them. And

1. It is implied that we acknowledge the existence, perfections, and unlimited dominion of the great Jehovah. That we believe in his universal providence, in which he is constantly displaying his infinite wisdom, uncontrollable power, and boundless goodness.

2. That we have chosen this God, for our God. That we are pleased with his character and government; and mean to make his will, as revealed in his word, the standard of our lives and actions.

3. That we reverence and worship him in all his appointed ways. That we celebrate his sabbaths,
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and submit to his institutions. That we embrace and obey his gospel ; suspending all our hopes of pardon and acceptance on the mercy which it proclaims. That we trust in him alone in times of trouble and distress, renouncing all other refuges. And

4. That we hold ourselves amenable to him for all our conduct in the present life. That we expect after death to stand before his awful tribunal, and be judged in righteousness *according to that we have done, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

These appear to be the principal ideas contained in this part of our subject. If indeed the Lord be our God, we have a foundation for confidence which nothing can shake. We may say in the language of the prophet, *Behold God is my salvation ; I will trust and not be afraid.*

A people acting under the impressive influence of these sentiments, will exhibit in their national character, the fairest traits of rectitude and honour. Governed by the sublime morality of the gospel, and directed by its heavenly precepts, impartial justice will guide their intercourse with foreign nations ; and a generous hospitality will alleviate the suffering fugitives who are cast upon their peaceful shores. Thus believing and thus acting, a people cannot fail of being happy at home, and respected abroad.

We have in this brief manner attempted to illustrate the principal ideas connected with the text,
and

and are now prepared to make some application of the subject.

Has the picture, my hearers, which has been drawn, appeared to you real ; or like the mere illusions of fancy ? Have you recognized in this description the features of your own country, or have you thought the preacher like the ancient *poets* describing a "golden age," which never existed but in their own imaginations ?

As the express design of our meeting at this time is, to offer up our devout and grateful acknowledgments to the God of our fathers, for the numerous blessings which we as a people enjoy ; it is therefore thought, that whatever contributes essentially to our happiness, must serve to swell the catalogue of our blessings, and furnish additional occasions for thanksgiving and praise.

In reviewing our subject you will permit me to ask a few questions, and leave every one's conscience to furnish the answer.

I then ask, are we, my brethren, a happy people, or are we not ? Is there a people on the globe whose happiness we envy ; who possess greater privileges, or are more distinguished by their blessings than we are ? Can you name the country, which enjoys free from oppression the blessings of undisturbed peace, to a greater degree than our own ? Has *the enemy been suffered to exact upon us, or the son of wickedness to afflict us ?** Have strange children whose mouth speaketh vanity, and whose right-hand is a right-hand of falsehood, been per-

* Psalm lxxxix. 22.

mitted

mitted successfully to plot sedition, or excite a spirit of insurrection in any part of our country?

Are our children furnished with proper means of instruction, so that we may reasonably hope "that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters polished after the similitude of a palace"? Is there a growing solicitude among the people at large to make more ample provision for their education; or are the interests of learning in a neglected declining state?

What is the state of our granaries and store-houses? Have we, like those described by Job, been driven by *famine and want into the wilderness to cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper roots for our meat*? Or have we been fed with the *finest of the wheat*? Are our *granaries* empty, or are they full, affording all manner of store? If the earth has not yielded her increase the past year in such abundance as at some former seasons, yet have we not an ample supply and to spare?

Has there been any *breaking in* upon our borders? Have foreign enemies infested our shores and alarmed us with the thunder of their cannon? Have the savages of the wilderness been permitted to spread terror and desolation upon our defenceless frontiers? Or have they been induced under our present mild administration to bury in forgetfulness the *hatchet of war*, and to exchange the instruments of torture for the *calumet* of peace?

Has there been any *going out*? Have any of our citizens revolted to our enemies? Or has any portion

tion of our country been bartered away to foreign nations, in order to supply an exhausted treasury ?

Is there any *complaining in our streets* ? If so, what is the cause ? Is any man oppressed ? Is justice either bought, or sold, or deferred to any man ? Are our citizens for want of employment walking the streets with folded arms and dismayed countenances, while their children at home are famishing for want of bread ? Is there *no hire for man, or for beast* ?* Or is there abundant employment for both, and ample reward ? Are our vessels mouldering away at our wharves, and our commerce languishing for want of protection ? Or does our canvass whiten in every clime, and our flag display its stars wherever the ocean rolls its flood ?

What is the state of morals and religion ? Has a spirit of infidelity (for want of legal restriction) been permitted to spread its deleterious influence over these United States ? Or have the very unusual and extensive revivals of religion which have taken place in different parts of our country, and amongst christians of different denominations, had a happy tendency to arrest and bound its progress ? Is Christianity losing ground ? Or is it from its own innate purity and strength, unaided by the sword of the magistrate, progressing in triumph through our land ? On a review of these things are not thousands ready to exclaim, *What hath God wrought* ?

If in giving a candid answer to the foregoing enquiries, we should be unavoidably brought to this conclusion ; “ We are undoubtedly the happiest

* Zech. viii, 20.

people

people in the world ;” if so, certainly we have abundant occasion for thanksgiving and praise.

From a consideration of the divine goodness, and in obedience to the recommendation of the supreme authority of our commonwealth, let us, my brethren, this day offer up our united praises to the God of our mercies. Let us *blefs his holy name together, and forget not all his benefits*. Have we not reason from a sense of our past neglects and misimprovement to mingle penitential sorrow with the voice of thanksgiving ? But God is still gracious, and has not taken the forfeiture from us. Surely then, we need only grateful hearts to make us happy.

In closing this discourse, you are invited to reflect a moment on the blessings we have experienced in the course of the past year.

Does not the general prosperity of our country call loudly for praise and thanksgiving from every grateful heart ? How distinguished is our lot ! Whilst scenes of war and desolation engage the attention of other nations, and they are lavishing their wealth in fruitless preparations for annoyance or defence ; we repose in safety under our own *vine and fig-tree*, and enjoy in peace, (a peace too, not purchased by the sacrifice of honour) the fruit of all our labour.

The unusual health which has been generally enjoyed, and particularly in our large towns and cities, calls for our grateful acknowledgments on this day. Our lives have been spared. The destroying angel has been commanded to sheath his sword,

sword, and spare a guilty land. The pestilence which walketh in darkness hath not come nigh our dwellings. It surely becomes us with reverent joy to acknowledge that *He that is our God, is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord, belong the issues from death.**

We add one more. If the various bounties of Providence demand our grateful acknowledgments, then surely the richer blessings of grace ought not to be passed over in silence, and forgotten.

The precious gospel is still continued to us. And to many in the course of the past year it has come not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.† Such in a very special manner have occasion to give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his unspeakable love to their precious souls. Of such it may be said with the greatest propriety, *this that happy people whose God is the Lord.*

Believing and rejoicing in the divine government, we will add our fervent supplications, that God will continue to us the blessing of the upper and the nether springs. That our land may become Immanuel's land, and the whole earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God.

Grant it, O Father, for the great Redeemer's sake,

AMEN.



* Psalm lxxviii. 20.

† 1 Thes. i. 5.

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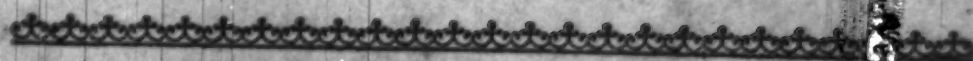
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Mr. BALDWIN'S

THANKSGIVING SERMON,

FEBRUARY 19, 1795.



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Stephen S. Nelson's

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PSALM XXXIII. 12.

BLESSED IS THE NATION WHOSE GOD IS THE
LORD, AND THE PEOPLE WHOM HE HATH
CHOSEN FOR HIS OWN INHERITANCE.



IN obedience to the call of the PRESIDENT of the United States, we are now, my brethren, assembled in the house of God, to offer Thanksgiving and Prayer to the "great Ruler of nations, for the manifold and signal mercies which distinguish our lot as a nation." And as God is this day publicly to be praised in the assemblies of his people, I have thought the passage now read, might be a suitable foundation for our present meditations.

This beautiful psalm, whoever might be the penman of it, is evidently designed to set forth the power and goodness of God in such an amiable light, as to excite our confidence, awaken our gratitude, and warm the devout passions of the soul with sacred joy.

If we contemplate God either in his word or works, we shall find abundant matter for joy and thankfulness: "For the word of the Lord is right, and all his works are done in truth. He loveth RIGHTEOUSNESS and JUDGMENT; the earth is full of the GOODNESS of the Lord."

From this view of the *righteousness, equity, and benevolence* of the divine government, the pious psalmist was led to exclaim as in the text; "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." That we may more fully enter into the spirit of the text, we shall attempt,

I. To show when it may be said of a nation, that the Lord is their God.

II. Consider what evidence a people may have, that the Lord hath chosen them for his inheritance.

III. We may infer the duty and obligations of a people thus favoured and blessed.—In illustrating of which, we shall attend to several particulars contained in the proclamation.

I. Then, we are to show when it may be said of a nation that the Lord is their God.

As a nation we form a particular character, in distinction from that of individuals. As such, we may exhibit the amiable features of virtue and religion; or the base picture of vice and infidelity. In this character we may receive temporal blessings, as the fruits and reward of virtue, and also suffer national calamities as the punishment of our vice and impiety.

Therefore, 1. When as a nation we acknowledge the eternal God to be the Creator, Preserver, and Upholder of all things. When we acknowledge his universal dominion over all worlds, and all beings. And when we attribute those divine perfections to him, which are necessary to form his exalted character, and render him the proper object of our love and esteem.

2. When we acknowledge that system of truth contained in the Bible to be *his word*; and as such, reverence and obey its doctrines and precepts. When we cordially subscribe to its divine originality, and rest all our hopes of futurity on its precious promises. When we endeavour to imbibe its genuine spirit, and live agreeably to its dictates.

3. When we acknowledge him as the alone object of religious worship and adoration, in distinction from all false gods and idols. When at stated seasons we attend upon his institutions, and offer up our prayers and praises through that medium which he hath appointed.

4. When we acknowledge him as our rightful Sovereign, and live in subjection to his laws. For it can never be supposed that a people have chosen the Lord for their God, while they refuse to have him reign over them. The very language of his enemies is, "Let us break his bands in sunder, and cast his cords away;" whilst those who approve of his government say, "The Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us." And said Jesus, "Then are ye my friends, when ye do whatsoever I command you."

5. When we acknowledge his universal providence over all the works of his hands. If we rely upon his protecting care and providence, we shall manifest it, by appealing to his wisdom to direct us, when involved in darkness and difficulty; and to his power to defend us, when surrounded by threatening dangers. And finally, in leaving the issue of our most interesting concerns, to the righteous disposal of Him who controls all human events.

6. And lastly. When we acknowledge the Lord to be the Giver of all our mercies. Nothing can be more calculated to keep us humble and thankful, than to realize our dependence on God. "Every good, and every perfect gift, comes down from the Father of lights." A sense of our own unworthiness, and of the divine goodness in bestowing favours upon us, will excite in us the most lively sentiments of gratitude and undissembled joy; and will finally issue in thanksgiving and praise.

But we come

II. To show, what evidence a people may have, that the Lord hath chosen them for his inheritance.

The terms very naturally imply each other; agreeably to the tenor of the new covenant, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." And again, "I love them that love me."

Although this part of our subject may not appear so capable of proof as the former, since neither love nor hatred can be certainly known by the common course of providence, as one event happeneth to all; yet undoubtedly there may be some rational

evidence given, in favour of the people whom God hath chosen.

As 1. God's disposing a people to choose him to be their God, is a clear evidence that he had previously chosen them for his inheritance. "Ye have not chosen me, (said the Saviour to his disciples, that is, first) but I have chosen you." They had indeed chosen him with all their hearts; but this was consequent upon his choice, and therefore could not be the cause, although it was the best evidence of their being his people. "We love him, because he first loved us." But we observe,

2. Special, and remarkable instances of divine interposition in behalf of a people, naturally lead us to conclude that God hath chosen them for his own.

Of old he chose the seed of Abraham for his people, and Jacob for the lot of his inheritance. And, although he suffered them for a season to be afflicted by their enemies, yet when the set time was come for their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, his arm was made quite bare in the sight of the nations.

The children of Israel at this time were sunk under the most abject slavery. They indeed groaned under their bondage, but had no idea of deliverance; and by being so long accustomed to serve, they had quite lost the spirit of enterprise. Yea, they were so far inured to their wretched condition, and so indifferent to the cause of freedom, that after Moses had exhibited his credentials, and given the most unequivocal proof of his being sent of

God to liberate them from their vile servitude, they were ready upon almost every appearance of difficulty or danger, to raise their clamorous voices and say, "Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians." But their drooping spirits were finally cheered, and with one consent they rallied round the standard of freedom. And while the Egyptians for their cruelty, were visited with various *plagues*, and were now mourning the loss of their first-born, under cover of the night they made their escape. But the tyrant of Egypt soon determined to pursue them.

The ransomed tribes not being furnished with weapons of defence, in order to escape the Philistines, took their rout by the way of the wilderness; and were now encamped between Migdol and the Red Sea. Imagination itself could scarce conceive of a situation more disadvantageous and distressing than theirs. The sea spread itself in their front; on either side they were inclosed by inaccessible mountains. *Habiroth* on one side, and *Baal-zephon* on the other, forbade their flanking off. Whilst in their rear they beheld their late imperious master, with all their tyrant bands, in crowded columns advancing towards them; glittering in armour, and amply furnished with the whole apparatus of death!

At this critical moment when ruin appeared inevitable; Moses, who had the most perfect command of himself, endeavoured to calm their fears, and excite their confidence in God. "Stand still," said he, "and see the salvation of the Lord." The cloud which led their way, instantly went back, and

stood as an impenetrable wall before the Egyptian host. Moses now took his awful rod, and stretched his hand out over the sea, and the waters divided. Then, "the waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee, they were afraid, and the depths were troubled. He made the waters to stand as an heap, they were congealed in the heart of the sea," until the chosen tribes had marched safely through.

But when one dark scene had passed, another equally distressing instantly opened to their view. They were now traversing the barren sands of Arabia beneath a burning sun, and their soul fainted within them. No fruitful fields supplied their hunger, nor cheering springs allayed their thirst. In vain they wish for the flesh-pots of Egypt, or for the waters of the Nile. No human exertions could save them. The Lord again interposed, and the heavens supplied them with bread, and the rock followed them with streams of living water.

The interpositions of Heaven were so visible in behalf of this people, that an eastern soothsayer, after using in vain all the arts of magic to curse them, was constrained to say, "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them."

When David upon a particular occasion was celebrating the divine goodness, it brought to remembrance those days of the right hand of the Most High, when God so remarkably interposed in their behalf; even when they were strangers in the land. "And when (said he) they went from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people, he suffered no man to do them wrong. Yea, he

reproved kings for their sakes ; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." And thus he led them on to possess the promised land.

But we are called upon by the Man whom we delight to honour, thankfully to notice "the manifold and signal mercies which distinguish our lot as a nation." But where shall we begin ! The various streams of divine goodness have constantly followed us through all this wilderness.

The interpositions of a kind Providence towards us from the first settlement of this country to the present day, have been almost as conspicuous as those granted to Israel of old.

The groaning of our fathers under the persecuting yoke of oppression, although in their native land, was heard in heaven. Nor did they long groan in vain : for God was pleased to dispose their hearts to unite, in forming the important design, of attempting a passage across the pathless ocean, in search of these western shores. Numerous were the trials and disappointments they experienced in leaving their native land ; and many were the fears and discouragements with which they conflicted on the boisterous ocean ; until at length they discovered the Continent, and again trod on solid ground.

But how seemingly easy would it have been for the savages to have collected their numerous tribes, and hurled such showers of darts and poisoned arrows upon them, as to have obliged them to quit the shore ; or at least to have harrassed them in such a manner, as to have prevented them from culti-

vating the foil, and in that way forced them to re-embark.

Various indeed were the scenes of distress through which the first adventurers passed ; and various were the deliverances which they experienced. Death early discovered their infant settlement, and within less than five months after their first landing at Plymouth, swept away nearly one half of their number. Sometimes painted savages with hideous yells disturbed their peaceful camp ; and sometimes famine with meagre visage stared them in the face.

Three years after their arrival, they were brought to such straits, their provisions being spent, when it was three or four months to harvest, so that when they lay down at night they knew not where to get any for the morning ; and for three or four months together they had neither bread nor corn. " Yet (said they) we bear our wants with cheerfulness, and rest on Providence." Nor did they rely in vain. God heard their cry and sent them relief.

Thus when death, and savages, and famine, seemed all to combine against this feeble colony, God was pleased to give the high command, " Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it."

Heaven had undoubtedly designed this beautiful part of the creation, for nobler purposes than to lie an uncultivated waste, for beasts and savages to roam over. It was evidently marked out by Divine Providence, as the favoured spot, on which Liberty (which had long been imprisoned in other parts of the globe) should erect her spacious temple.

But this high design was not then fully understood ; and America, like a child in minority, for a long season was under “tutors and governors” of a foreign appointment, until the fulness of time came for her to be free.

But time would fail, to recount the various wonders of divine goodness towards this land ; or the numerous instances of oppression from a foreign power, which led on to that memorable season, which marked a new epoch in the history of the world—I mean the fourth of July, 1776, which announced the FREEDOM and INDEPENDENCE of America.

That auspicious morn will long be remembered (and perhaps as long celebrated) as the political birth-day of this nation. Then our fathers in council assembled, made their solemn appeal to the great Judge of the universe, for the rectitude of their intentions, and the justice of their cause.

And, my brethren, were not the interpositions of Divine Providence quite visible in our behalf, in disposing the different States to lay aside their local prejudices, and all unite in one great object ? And did not Heaven remarkably smile upon our exertions ? How surprising was the spirit of enterprise, which then appeared in every class of citizens ! Our legislators in Congress, nobly opposed and effectually counteracted the subtle and perfidious politics of a nation, long skilled in the intrigues of war. And our young sons, uninured to the dangers and hardships of a camp ; but animated with the noble sentiments of liberty, and led on by our immortal

WASHINGTON, encountered an army of disciplined *veterans*, with a courage and firmness which would have done honour to Roman bravery. Unfubdued by difficulties, and unappalled by dangers, our troops were led on from conquering to conquer; one army after another falling into their hands, until our foes were obliged to subscribe conditions of peace.

Shall we now, my brethren, ascribe all this glory to ourselves? No, we will say with the devout psalmist, "If it had not been the Lord, who was on our side, now may *America* say; if it had not been the Lord, who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick." It was the God of armies which led our troops to victory and glory; and His forever shall be the praise.

Happy indeed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath thus highly favoured.

We come now, as was proposed,

III. To infer the duty and obligations of a people thus favoured and blessed. The two following inferences very naturally arise from the subject;

1. If we have chosen the Lord to be our God, it is our indispensable duty to acknowledge, with thanksgiving, the numerous favours he confers upon us.
2. As we are dependent creatures, it is our duty to beseech the kind Author of these blessings to continue them to us; and extend those which we enjoy to all mankind.

In illustrating these observations, we shall attend particularly to the proclamation, upon which we are now convened:

1. We are called upon to offer thanksgiving "for the possession of Constitutions of government which unite, and by their union establish liberty with order." If ever a people were under obligations to the great Ruler of the universe, for the full and free enjoyment of their natural rights and privileges, we certainly are.* If we are not happy, we must blame ourselves for it; for our modes of government are not the dictates of a conquering tyrant; but the deliberate choice of American freemen. No foreign lord has dominion over us: but our rulers are of ourselves, and our governors proceed from among us. And as the most important offices, both in the Federal and State governments are elective; no *hereditary dunce* can ever be imposed upon the people, but the man whose tried wisdom, fidelity and patriotism, shall commend him to their choice.

But our Constitutions are said to "unite, and by their union to establish liberty with order." But why do they unite? Undoubtedly because they secure the *equal rights* of all. We cannot reasonably expect that either "union or order" will long prevail, where the essential rights of one part of the community are violated, and government is institut-

* As a nation, we certainly enjoy every natural right; and if under any of the State Constitutions, any class of citizens do not enjoy equal privileges, the matter will undoubtedly be attended to at a proper time, and the grievance redressed.

ed and administered for the benefit of a part only, and not for the whole. May we ever consider our rights unalienable, and in a constitutional way remonstrate against the smallest infringement.

2. We are directed to offer public thanksgiving to God, "for the preservation of our peace, foreign and domestic."

A moment's reflection, my brethren, will convince you of the propriety of this remark. For notwithstanding the embarrassments which our trade hath suffered on the seas, and the many unprovoked insults offered to our flag; we have shown ourselves superior to those who have injured us, by despising rather than retaliating their crimes. And although our western border has been partially distressed, yet the great body of the nation has been folded in the secure arms of peace. And by the blessing of God on the cause of Liberty in Europe; and the wise and steady exertions of our supreme Executive, aided by our Federal Council, we have been preserved from the horrors and calamities of a foreign war.

3. "The suppression of the late insurrection" is mentioned by our worthy President, as matter of public thanksgiving. And let the cause of that unhappy insurrection be what it may, we will rejoice and praise God, that the consequences were far less fatal than we feared; and that it has been wisely overruled, not only for the suppression of that rebellion, but for the strengthening and cementing of the Union. May it also be farther beneficial,

by deterring others from opposing lawful authority, and prevent their making the desperate appeal to arms.

4. "The prosperous course of our affairs, public and private," calls for our grateful acknowledgements.

That our wealth and population have rapidly increased within these few years past, much beyond any former calculations cannot be denied. And we have the satisfaction still to believe that the tide has not begun to ebb, but is yet increasing. Our settlements are extending; the wilderness yields to the hand of cultivation, and becomes a fruitful field; towns are built, and cities enlarged. Citizens of every class find sufficient employ, and ample encouragement to reward their industry. The liberal arts are nourished, and useful knowledge diffused; and surely there can be nothing wanting but real piety to make us truly happy.

But from the uncertain tenure by which we hold these enjoyments, we are led to infer

2. That it is our duty to beseech the kind Author of these blessings to continue them to us, and extend those which we enjoy to all mankind.

And 1. By the proclamation we are directed "to beseech the kind Author of these blessings graciously to prolong them to us."

We shall be naturally led to this if we suitably realize, that the same hand which bestows our blessings, may take them away at any time, without asking our leave. And such is the versatility of all earthly things, that we know not what will be on

the morrow, or even what the present day will bring forth. We know not how soon the present scene may be reversed, and the dark clouds of adversity overshadow our brightest prospects. Let us then humbly acknowledge our dependance on that living Fountain, and thankfully adore the Giver of all our mercies.

2. We are exhorted to pray God, "to imprint on our hearts a deep and solemn sense of our obligations to him for them."

Without this, we can never be thankful: for if we consider our enjoyments as the just reward of our own wisdom or industry, we shall feel thankful to none but ourselves. The Lord deliver us from the horrid sin of ingratitude! As our blessings are multiplied, may we consider our obligations increased, to love and adore our great Benefactor.

3. We are to beseech the kind Author of our blessings, "to teach us rightly to estimate their immense value."

Our blessings, my brethren, are numberless and great. We are a people highly favoured of the Lord. Our civil and religious privileges are none of the least; we sit under our own vine and fig-tree, and none are permitted to disturb or make us afraid. We worship God according to the dictates of our own consciences, without the dread of an inquisition, or fear of persecution. We are indeed exalted to heaven in point of privilege; let us not forget, that "where much is given, there much will be required."

4. We are directed to pray that we may be kept from "abusing" the favour we enjoy.

It is too often the case, that those who have called upon God in the day of their trouble, have forgotten him in the time of prosperity. Happy would it be if we could learn that sacred lesson, "to use the world as not abusing it." Our blessings are given us to use, but not to abuse. They are often bestowed in abundance, so that we may disperse abroad, and give to the poor; and thus lay up a treasure in the heavens, which fadeth not away. But should we become vain in our prosperity, and forget the God which made us, and lightly esteem the Rock of our salvation; we must expect he will turn his hand against us, and deprive us of the blessings we abuse. May the Lord "preserve us from the arrogance of prosperity," and enable us so to walk before him as a nation, that he may delight to prosper and bless us.

But we are to conclude our supplications by praying, 5. That God would "impart all the blessings we possess, or ask for ourselves, to the whole family of mankind."

This beautiful sentiment, my brethren, breathes universal benevolence and good will to the whole human race. Much more is implied in it than what is expressed. I conceive that it fully authorizes and enjoins us, to extend our views to other objects not so particularly mentioned in the proclamation. And 1. We will fervently pray that the blessings of the GOSPEL of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we so peculiarly enjoy, may be extended to all mankind.

That the altars and idols of Pagan superstition may fall before the light of truth ; and that the shades of Mahometan imposture may be dispelled by the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness. And that the dragon, and the beast, and the false prophet ; and all the antichristian powers, which have in any way opposed and persecuted the religion of Jesus Christ, may be subdued. May the gospel with its benign influences extend from land to land, and from sea to sea ; until the knowledge of God shall cover the earth, from the rising to the setting sun.

2. As we enjoy the blessings of PEACE, we sincerely wish the same to all our fellow-men.

Base indeed must be the heart, which for any pecuniary advantages would wish a war to continue, which makes such havoc of the human species. Hence, my brethren, let us offer up our prayers continually to the GOD OF PEACE, that the present distressing war among the European nations may come to an end. And that it may terminate in the overthrow of tyranny and despotism ; and in the establishment of liberty and the EQUAL RIGHTS of man. And particularly, that that nation which came to our relief, in the day of our trouble, may speedily *obtain* and *give* such honourable conditions of peace, as shall convince the world that they are friends to liberty, order, and humanity ; and are only to be dreaded by tyrants. May they soon realize all the advantages, which a free and enlightened people can derive, from a government framed by the unalterable principles of reason, and founded upon the eternal basis of *equal rights*.

But 3. As we desire and enjoy LIBERTY and FREEDOM ourselves, we will not forget our brethren, who are in captivity and slavery.

Our unhappy countrymen, who have fallen into the hands of the *Algerines*, whose "tender mercies are cruelties," shall not be forgotten in our supplications. We will beseech the God of all compassion to remember them in the land of their captivity, and to give them favour in the eyes of those who have carried them captive. We will not only pray for them, but whenever we shall be called upon by proper authority, we will cheerfully subscribe for their redemption, and restore them again to the embraces of their friends, and the blessings of freedom.

But the benevolent sentiment we now dwell upon, does not confine our wishes here; no, we wish the same blessings of liberty which we enjoy to all mankind. May the day soon arrive, when not difference of climate or features, nor the colour of the skin,—when nothing but crimes shall consign any of the human race to slavery.

Urged by my own feelings, I am persuaded, my brethren, you will indulge me to mention in particular one of our suffering friends. I mean the brave, but unfortunate *Marquis de la Fayette*! "At the age of nineteen he espoused the cause of America," and early determined to embark for this country. But before he could accomplish his design, intelligence arrived at Paris; "that the American insurgents, reduced to two thousand, were flying before a British force of thirty thousand regulars." In

short, things appeared so discouraging, that our commissioners at Paris "thought it but honest to dissuade him from the present prosecution of his perilous enterprise." But nobly triumphing over every discouragement, he said, "Hitherto I have only cherished your cause—I am now going to serve it."* He at length procured a vessel, at his own expense, and came to America. Soon after his arrival, Congress conferred on him the rank of Major-General, which he accepted of; but with the condition of serving at his own expense.†

His services for several years together in the American army are too well known, to require a particular detail upon this occasion. The latter part of his command, however, was peculiarly distinguished by the difficulties he encountered, and the important services he rendered this country. Particularly in counteracting, and harassing the movements of the British army in Virginia.

From his embarrassed situation at a certain time, Lord Cornwallis thought himself so sure of taking him, that he wrote to the British court, that "the boy could not escape him." But the fact proved just the reverse; for he found, not long after, that it was impossible for him to escape; and was finally obliged to resign himself and army as prisoners of war.

Can we now, my brethren, who enjoy the fruit of his toils, forget this generous patron of American freedom, who is now suffering the horrors of a wretched confinement, and languishing in a dreary

* Amer. Geog. p. 136, 137.

† Ibid.

prison? No, we will raise our supplicating voice to Heaven for him. And may that God who heareth the groans and sighs of the prisoner, break the bars of *Magdeburg Castle*, and let that oppressed patriot go free. And may the glorious gospel of peace, which proclaims liberty to *captives*, and opens the prison doors to them that are *bound*, extend its heavenly influence throughout the world.

To conclude.

While we commiserate the case of the unfortunate, and sympathize in their distresses, let us endeavour wisely and thankfully to improve our privileges and blessings to the glory of God, and the best good of our fellow-men. Let us diligently cultivate habits of "sobriety, order, morality and piety;" and study to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.

And may the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel; the God in whom our fathers trusted and found deliverance, continue to be our God, and to bless us. "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency upon the sky." "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord."

A M E N.

